



NEWS photo by Dan Farrell

Dr. Leonard Parr (L) of medical center at 104 Avenue B, talks with Human Resources Administrator Jule Sugarman and Deputy Administrator Robert Carroll (right).

Drawing a Map Of Land of Nod

By WILLIAM SHERMAN

13th of a series

Addicts with medicaid cards have found a doctor's office on the lower East Side where they can obtain prescriptions for tranquilizers and hypnotic drugs at a cost to the city of about \$15 a pop.

Each day, dozens of drowsy, incoherent addicts and methadone maintenance patients pass through the medical-dental facilities at 104 Avenue B, where they sit for a quick examination by Dr. Leonard Parr and in almost every case, walk out with prescriptions for one or more of the drugs—some of which can be addictive.

On Thursday afternoon, a NEWS reporter, accompanied by Jule Sugarman, human resources administrator, a doctor from the Health Department, and another top city official, paid a surprise visit to the facility.

Earlier in THE NEWS Medicaid Probe, a reporter posing as a welfare client with a medicaid card visited the Avenue

**MEDICAID
PROBE**



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Paying Surprise Visit To Land of Noddors

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B facility, run by Dr. Parr, along with a NEWS photographer posing as his cousin.

The floor was littered with cigarette butts and candy wrappers, and lounging in several old chairs there were 13 people waiting for care.

A stocky man in a white orderly's shirt kept order, occasionally wrestling several of the patients away from the door to the doctor's offices and admonishing, "Wait your turn."

"How come you're here?" the reporter asked one man waiting in line.

"I got to cop man, I'm feeling bad."

Other patients waiting in line gave similar answers, and after a conversation with the receptionist, the reporter left.

Later, an examination of city records showed the center, which also features a podiatrist, dentist and a chiropractor's office, has been run for several years by Dr. Parr, who is in his early fifties.

Charges Against Doctor

Parr, who worked at several medicaid centers before settling at 104 Avenue B, has been called down to the Health Department, where records show he was charged with gross over-utilization of X-rays, giving unnecessary cardiograms and abusing the program by seeing more than 75 patients a day. The department reduced his payments over the last few years by more than \$15,000.

On Thursday, the reporter returned, this time with Sugarman, Robert Carroll, his deputy administrator, and Dr. Steven Rosenberg, deputy executive medical director of the city's medicaid program.

The scene was the same as on the reporter's previous visit, a group of young men, half-asleep, in the waiting area, but this time, after the center personnel learned of the visit, three girls were busy sweeping the floors and washing the sinks and tables.

Parr, a thin, bearded man, appeared at the door to the offices.

"We would like to look at your patient records," said Sugarman. Parr took the group into a back room, where filing cabinets are kept.

Question for the Doctor

All of the patients were on medicaid, the records showed, and in the first 20 files examined, every patient had received a large prescription for valium, a tranquilizer, and parest, a hypnotic similar to Quaalude that is fast becoming a favorite among pill poppers.

The records showed that in each case, the city was billed between \$6 and \$12 for Parr's examination and then about another \$7 for the prescription.

Sugarman asked the doctor,

"Why are all these patients receiving the same drug?"

"It's medically indicated," said Parr.

"Where?" asked Sugarman, looking at several records spread before him. "Where are the diagnoses?"

"I write the diagnoses on the bill and keep a copy here," said Parr. "In each case the diagnoses on the bill was a variation of depression."

"There is no diagnosis on these patients' records?" said Dr. Rosenberg. "There is no indication as to why you are prescribing this drug."

"Why do all these people come here?" asked Sugarman.

"They ask to see the doctor," said Parr.

"Yes, but why?" asked Carroll, noting that there was no indication of a patient's complaint on the records.

More Files Examined

"They don't tell me why they come here, replied Parr.

Rosenberg commented. "There should be a record as to why a patient comes here, like a cold, or a sore neck, or dizziness, but in your charts there is no such notation."

Twenty more patient files were pulled, and on each one, with two exceptions, was a xerox of the patient's medicaid card, negative physical examination findings, an occasional blood pressure reading and then "RX valium parest."

Carroll thumbed through the records and said, "Valium and parest, valium and parest, donatol and parest, parest, valium and parest . . . this is all the same."

Then Sugarman commented, "There's no temperature taken, nothing, and in the repeat visits there's just a note of the prescription."

Parr replied, "Oh yes, they come in for refills every two weeks." Parr, records show, bills for the "refill" visits as well.

"If these people are on methadone, or are addicts, they should be receiving treatment at their methadone programs," said Sugarman.

Last year, from his business at 104 Avenue B, Parr billed the city \$76,000. He said he "treats about 40 patients a day."

Yesterday, as a result of the surprise visit, Carroll and Rosenberg stated that Parr's payments would be held up pending a complete investigation of his practice by the Health Department.

NEXT: Where do we go from here?